The desperate, dangerous nu- clear power industry has dropped a $50 billion steel bomb meant to irradiate the Obama Stimulus Package. It comes in the form of a mega-loan guarantee package that would build new reactors Wall Street wouldnt touch with 20 feet of lead cash. It will take a healthy dose of citizen action to stop it, so start calling your Senators now.

The Stimulus Package is explicit-ly meant to create jobs within the next two years. But according to sources at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, no new reactors could be licensed for construction within that time. Nor could any new coal plants. And the funds in this rider are to “remain available until December 2009.” That means their “stimulus” might not go into effect for many years.

But the nuclear industry does have the ability to spend large sums of money on “site preparation” and other busy work prior to being licensed. But the handout is clearly directed at making cash. It will take a healthy dose of new reactors (and possibly to put old ones back again with a blank check package that went down in flames along with the stock market.

Still unable to get private financ- ing, the industry is back yet again. In the interim, the projected cost of building new reactors has soared to more than $10 billion each, and some are over budget. In the wake of the failure of the previous generation of reac- tors came in hugely over budget. According to the Nuclear Infor- mation & Resource Service, one DOE study places the overall aver- age overrun at 107%. But reactor projects such as Seabrook, in New Hampshire, New York’s Shoreham, Pennsylvania’s Trojan, and many others, far exceeded that.

The Congressional Budget Of- fice now predicts that half the nuclear utilities using such a loan program will go into default. Some $18.5 billion in loan guarantees has already been approved, apparently for such use. But its legality is be- yond the court of public opinion, and the loan has not been distributed by the Depar- tment of Energy.

Washington insiders believe this latest attempt at a pre-auction bailout has once again from Do- menicci, who has stayed in Wash- ington to lobby for his radioactive benefactor after apparently retir- ing from the Senate in January. This latest package package was not part of the Stimulus Package that passed the House. Its secretive, late- minute nature is reminiscent of how former Vice President Dick Cheney did busi- ness on oil leases. The reappear- ance of this kind of back door dealing and the lack of any controls at all, of the seventeen companies with applications for new reactors before the NRC are counting on this extreme to continue old style regulatory capture.

In Albuquerque, the old oligar- chy preached the gospel of growth, of sprawling growth, of shrinking, unregulated growth, just like the oligarchies of other big cities in the west. They looked the other way at industries, and the military indus- trial complex, dumping their waste indiscriminately on the landscape and polluting the aquifer. And they pushed “inevitable” growth on the fiction of an endless supply of wa- ter.

A new kind of thinking in high desert Albuquerque has to start with water. Water is the defining limitation for growth in our region. The old way of thinking about wa- ter in Albuquerque was reductive. The new way of thinking about water has to be holistic.

Following the old kind of think- ing, which pits urban users against rural agriculturalists, is the path to a desperate situation in which vari- ous water interests fight ferociously in court to retain or acquire the water they need. Albuquerque has known for more than a decade that its aquifer is being fine but not as big as the old myths said it was. But its water policies have been decided old style, despite modern conditions.

The reductive view looks at ur- ban growth as the sole determinant of water use, and how urban users sees the connections between ur- ban use and rural use of water, and how the two form a complete picture when joined with urban water conservation, and aggressive water recycling. Residential and indus- trial use water can be fine tuned to far greater degrees than it is today, by simply raising the price of water to something near its actual value. A little known lawsuit directed against the city of Albuquerque Water Project is still in state court, and poses a logical challenge to the idea that diverting water for drinking is a wholly benign no- tion.

Water from the San Juan-Chama Project, which will supply Albu-querque eventually with 90% of its drinking water, has been flowing down the Rio Grande, undeterred, since at least 1972. Albu-querque has from time to time tried to pump water from the Rio Grande out of some 48,000 acre feet of it, to the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District (MRGCD) for use in irrigation and boseque and endan-}

Old Thinking, New Thinking

By V.B. Price

The elections of 2008 showed that a majority of American vot- ers, some 67 million of them, had moved away, or perhaps had been pushed away by economic cri- sis, from an old, worn out kind of thinking. The election of a new, old oligarchy, what we used to call in the 1970s the “plunder- ing plutocrats,” and their one true friend, Wall Street. In Albuquerque, the old oligar- chy preached the gospel of growth, of sprawling growth, of shrinking, unregulated growth, just like the oligarchies of other big cities in the west. They looked the other way at industries, and the military indus- trial complex, dumping their waste indiscriminately on the landscape and polluting the aquifer. And they pushed “inevitable” growth on the fiction of an endless supply of wa- ter.

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The lawsuit contends that when that water is diverted from the Rio for drinking water, a stretch of the river from Alameda to Isleta, and all those who used it, will be grievously deprived of the water they need.

The Drinking Water Project will, many rural people think, have unanswered, and therefore unin- tended, consequences that arise from reductive rather than holistic thinking.

Folks worry that the Drinking Water Project, which has just start- ed diverting water, will stimulate more sprawling growth, based on a false sense of water security. The San Juan-Chama Project re- lies, like most surface water sourc- es, on Surface Water Resources, a company spun off in the mid-1990s in southern Colorado. The San Juan is a tributary of the Colorado River. Snow pack in the region has been down for more than a decade probably owing to global warming pressures. Our region is in a pro- duced, and mega cities in Arizona and California competing with cash strapped New Mexico for Colorado water.

The old reductive way of think- ing about water has also seen in a law in New Mexico that rural water users have come close to erasing from the books. The books are working harder than ever to remove them from the legisla- tive session. It involves urban con- demnation of rural water beyond a city’s limits.

In other words, the city of Al- buquerque could, in effect, steal water from the state, if it needed to supply is pop- ulation with water. As far as I can tell, there are no limits attached to this power of condemnation. No city, so far, has used its powers of water condemnation. And if a co- alition of rural water users, includ- ing tribal entities, has their way, no city will.

For years, water planning was in the hands solely of plutocratic in- terests. The Drinking Water Project has taken root since 1988 when a controversy over the Pecos River Project, which caused the creation of 16 water planning districts in the state and required hundreds of rural and ur- ban water users to become experts in the holistic issues of water sus- tainability. This enormous grass- roots body of citizen expertise acts as a potent counterculture to the old reductive way of thinking, and to the disenchanted and losers in water disputes in New Mexico. It’s a delicate balance that the holistic thinking must not allow to be lost.
Higher levels of Tritium and Solvents found in New Study at the Sandia Mixed Waste Landfill dump

By Dave McCoy

On December 22, 2008, the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) violated its own administrative order for citizen involve-
ment for the Mixed Waste Landfill (MWL) dump at Sandia National Laboratories (Sandia) by approving a Corrective Measures Implementa-
tion Plan (CMI Plan). This unapproved public approval of the CMI Plan allows Sandia to construct a dirt cover over the MWL dump and leave 700,000 cubic feet of long-lived radioactive and hazardous waste in the MWL dump. The waste lies above Albuquerque’s drinking water aquifer in unlined pits and trenches in an area where numerous other dumps, such as the Chemical Waste Landfill (CWL) dump, have leaked toxic contaminants to the groundwater. During the period from 1999 to 2002, Sandia excavated the toxic wastes buried in the CWL dump.

The NMED approval of the CMI Plan is a violation of the 2005 Fi-
al Order of NMED Secretary Ron Carney that requires that the public shall be provided the opportunity for review and comment on such documents prior to their approval by the NMED.

For the past 2 years, Citizen Action has been trying to obtain a 2006 TechLaw report from the NMED about the release of toxic waste from the MWL dump. The TechLaw report was used to review the CMI Plan and was one of the reasons the NMED issued a notice of disapproval (NOD) for the plan in late 2006. The NMED used Citizen Action to keep the TechLaw report secret. The lawsuit was thrown out of court. The Court ruled the TechLaw report is a public record. NMED is now appealing the deci-
sion. Citizen Action still can’t ob-
tain the TechLaw report because an automatic stay is in place dur-
ing the appeal.

The NMED NOD required a new study of the soil gas contamina-
tion beneath the MWL dump. Sandia performed the study and submitted a report of findings to NMED in August of 2008. The NMED approved the soil gas re-
port on September 26, 2008 also without the required opportunity for public review and comment. The CMI Plan has changed greatly from what was originally proposed to the public. These important changes were made through “private communica-
tions” between NMED and Sandia that excluded the public. Among the changes are: different trigger levels for detecting contamination and sampling requirements that are not responsive to public concerns for early detection of contamination.

The removal of Tritium as a contaminant to sample in the soil gas below the MWL dump is one example of not meeting public concern.

Using “private communica-
tions” that the public could not see, NMED agreed with Sandia not to require further Tritium monitoring. All earlier studies identified Triti-
um as the primary contaminant be-
ing released from the MWL dump. Because of its short half-life, the Tritium contamination was ex-
pected to decrease by more than 50% in the new study. However, the opposite has occurred.

Geologist Robert Gilkeson states that “The data in the new Soil Gas Report show a huge increase in the Tritium contamination in the soil gas below the MWL dump. A ma-

or mistake is that the new study did not sample the known Tritium hot spots. However, the data show an accelerated release of Tritium from the unlined pits and trenches. The accelerated release increases the danger for Tritium to contami-

nate the groundwater below the MWL dump. Quarterly monitor-

ing of the soil gas below the dump is crucial for early warning. The decision of the NMED to stop the soil gas sampling for Tritium is a mistake. Sandia has worked hard to depths of several hundred feet below the MWL dump for Tritium release for years now, yet they claim the spotting of groundwater contami-

nation.” Gilkeson added that “The con-
tent of the dirt cover will make it more difficult and very expensive to study the newly dis-
covered releases of Tritium and Solvents from the dump. The dirt cover should not be installed until a comprehensive study of contamination is fully studied.”

The 2008 sampling data are evi-
dence of the new and increasing releases of Tritium and Solvents (VOCs) from the un-

lined pits and trenches in MWL dump. The soil gas report was based on shallow sampling to only 50 feet at only three locations. The 50 feet depth is below the known Tritium hot spots that were identified in earlier studies.

The new study did not collect samples at the known Tritium hot spots. No comparison of the new study, data comparison was not accomplished between the new soil gas study and the older study. No comparison of the earlier data could be made with the sparse and insufficient data in the earlier data study for similar sampling.

Groundwater monitoring wells for the MWL dump were recently required to be replaced due to the original wrong placement of the wells and well screens, corrosion of the screens and other problems that have led to the removal of the wells beginning in 1989. Insuf-

ficient data has been provided by the new monitoring wells to be able to conclude that there is no contamination to the groundwater beneath.

Numerous environmental orga-

nizations and individuals previ-

ously opposed the complaints with the US Environmental Pro-
tection Agency Region 6 in late 2007 regarding NMED not allow-

ing public participation at both Los Alamos National Laboratory and Sandia National Laboratories. A complaint under the NMED’s Citizen ActionNew Mexico (505) 262-1862
dave@radfreemnm.org

Citizen Action is a project of the New Mexico Community Foundation.

The constraint of the “impair-

ment” of contract action also is an absent meaningful federal “claw-

back” action, the several state leg-

islatures; these citizens have been victimized, can act as a rational, reasonable and necessary exer-

cise of their police powers, i.e., protection of the public welfare.

Thus, in Home Building & Loan vs. Blaisdell (1934), the U.S. Supreme Court declared that “the state statute extending the period for mortgage redemption on the basis of the length of the mortgagee’s possession did not invalidate a mortgage. It is requi-

red that the ‘reservation of the reasonable exercise of the [state’s] protective power’ [be] read into all valid contracts and agreements even if the court invalidated a state legisla-

tive abrogation of a covenant in a public bond issue, Justice Harry Blackmun, the opinion’s author, was careful to note that contrac-

tual impairments might well be upheld if ‘they were reasonable and necessary to serve an impor-

tant public purpose.” U.S. Trust vs. New Jersey (1977). And, more currently, Justice John Paul Stevens noted in Keystone Bla-

nuinoes & Equity Association vs. De-

Benedictus (1987) that “it is well settle-

ted that the prohibition against impairing the obligation of a con-

tract is not to be read literally.’”

Thus, while federal clawback does not appear to be effective than state legislation, the apparent reluctance of the Obama administration and the Congress to use the powers even if the pursuit of state legislative remedies. Absent either federal or state action, the residents of New Mexico were asked to thank Teddy Roosevelt referred as “the malefactors of great wealth”, which will have gone away with one of the greatest heists in the history of the human race.
Why Homeland Security is So Beloved

By Jim Hightower

The Department of Homeland Security is in the spotlight this Christmas, when it used the Natural Conservancy to condemn a local couple, Bruce and100 acres on the Rio Grande, and the federal wall builders wanted to take a 60-foot-wide strip from the couple amounting to about 8 acres.

Why fuss over eight acres? Well, you’d assume that the wall would be going up on the actual border, but no. They want to build this section a mile-and-a-half from the border, thus putting thee-fourths of the actual border, but no. They want to build this section a mile-and-a-half from the border, thus putting thee-fourths of it between the wall and Mexico. The most critical part of the wildlife habitat, and even the home of the preserve’s mangroves and endangered wildcats and a rare palm forest.

A few years ago, the conservancy put $100,000 or the Rio Grande, and the federal wall builders wanted to take a 60-foot-wide strip from the couple amounting to about 8 acres. They want to build this section a mile-and-a-half from the border, thus putting thee-fourths of the actual border, but no. They want to build this section a mile-and-a-half from the border, thus putting thee-fourths of it between the wall and Mexico. The most critical part of the wildlife habitat, and even the home of the preserve’s mangroves and endangered wildcats and a rare palm forest.

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Dick Gaughan Raises a Rebel
Against Lies of the Past

By Bill Nevis (New Mexico Irish American Society Member)

“Told old Geronimo by storm, And they rapped all the feathers off his uniform! Warden, warden, can’t you see? American Society Member)

Phillips, Scotland’s Dick Gaughan is the man folk singer’s cadillac in performance to

and his early solo record, Dick Gaughan's in-your-face political ambitions have caused his US

and the rich, to those who would like us to think that the poor are poor because they have no

and dark, with nothing left for generations to come.

We must be clear in our expectations and unrelenting in our demands. We did not elect new leaders to maintain the status quo. Mr. Obama, who has made friends for us by building schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan, of- en makes foreign policy counsel in Taos Econo- mics to President Bush.

Mr. Obama, praising his efforts in the direction of renew- able energy. Now, he adds still, remember that 90% of our current energy comes from coal, oil, and nuclear. Infrastructure is one area that [could be in- cidence, 90% of the money allocated for energy so we can build shiny new sources of earth toxins.

No amount of bail-out money will do us any good if we keep doing the same stupid things that got us into this mess. If anything should be bailed out, it would be small, local business, family farms, locally produced organics, solar, wind and geothermal energy, the Kyoto Accords and the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty with zero tolerance for the building of any nuclear weapons or infrastructure for any purpose other than cleaning up disgraceful waste.

Coal, oil and nuclear, contrary to the dreams of Shell and other mega-profit companies, stand between us and the promise of America as it is. Mr. Obama recognizes the need to end [of [it be coin- cidence, 90% of the energy allocated for energy so we can build shiny new sources of earth toxins.

And film, “FrostNixon” by Rick Perlstein

Interviewed during his last Albu-querque concert visit, Gaughan saw Native American struggle as linked to worldwide meddling by brutal outsiders – a subject well-known to Scots. “We used to elect our king in Scotland, you know. The last one we elected was MacBeth.” Gaughan despises the inherited-monarchy sys- tem of the UK: “I think Mrs. Windsor [Queen Elizabeth] is probably a very nice, wealthy woman, but there’s few Scots want her telling us what to do in our own country,” he chuckles, affirming his own belief in Scottish Republicanism, and democratic rule.

Sprung from Highland Scots and Irish roots, Dick Gaughan is the established Bard of Edinburgh, a central figure in the 1970s Celtic folk revival with The Boys of the Lough and his early solo record, “Handful of Dust,” is an essential classic.

Gaughan snorts his distaste for weary old songs about fallen ights. Fortunately he did so unmourned in 1976, an angry poor boy in rural California, he won scholarships to little Whitter College and now Duke Law School, mainly by his skill as a debater. Two Duke classmatess had higher grades and went to Wall Street. Disappoint- ment, he went to Washington and now lives in a rent-controlled apartment in the Foggy Bottom.

Postwar he was recruited as a GOP candidate by rich Southern Cali- fornia and won a seat in the U.S. House and then in the Senate in ut- terly dishonest “Red”-smearing campaigns. Widespread American fear of soviet subversion led to personal and political success. As a star of the House Un-American Affairs Commit- tee, Nixon failed to prove the divi- sion of striped-pants diplomat Alger His, but created an impression that Gaughan’s usage was hiding some- thing. That coup landed Nixon the job of Eisenhower’s veep. After all, his had been at Yalta, where Stalin sup- posedly duped an ailing FDR. Seem- ingly washed up in the Kennedy/LBJ era, Nixon was kept on the campaign trail by rich friends. Dissatisfaction with the military quagmire in Vietnam brought Nixon to the White House in 1968. Nixon and Kissinger launched “carpet bombing” of Laos and Cambodia to cut off alleged sup- port of Vietnamese “insurgents” (Ken- nedy administration’s term). When the insurgents were clearly winning in 1972, Nixon and Kissinger got the idea of establishing diplomatic rela- tions with Red China. (Senator Joseph Clark, a Pennsylvania Democrat, had warned Nixon that his policy was failing and would be an aid to political success. As a star of the House Un-American Affairs Commit- tee, Nixon failed to prove the divi- sion of striped-pants diplomat Alger His, but created an impression that Gaughan’s usage was hiding some- thing. That coup landed Nixon the job of Eisenhower’s veep. After all, his had been at Yalta, where Stalin sup- posedly duped an ailing FDR. Seem- ingly washed up in the Kennedy/LBJ era, Nixon was kept on the campaign trail by rich friends. Dissatisfaction with the military quagmire in Vietnam brought Nixon to the White House in 1968. Nixon and Kissinger launched “carpet bombing” of Laos and Cambodia to cut off alleged sup- port of Vietnamese “insurgents” (Ken- nedy administration’s term). 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After the September 11 attacks, a Rail advocate told Congress that a good national transportation system should be like a “Three-legged stool”, with Road, Rail and Air being the legs. He stated, and we agree, that one of the legs is missing (or is just a stump). We Americans abandoned Rail as our primary passenger-carrying “mode” less than 60 years ago, and we’re already in serious trouble as a result.

Rail is safe. Rail is remarkably efficient in land, fuel, materials and maintenance. Rail is environmentally friendly. Rail promotes renewable energy and reinvestment in our city centers and first-ring suburbs. Rail is a natural partner to walking and biking. And people just plain like trains. And with high gas prices (they’ll be back up soon enough) and our considerable air-travel headaches, people are liking them more and more. Look at Amtrak’s record-setting ridership numbers.

Freight Rail is doing well and local and/or regional passenger Rail is coming back all over America (even here). But nationally, all we have is Amtrak, and it’s not nearly big enough.

The history of Amtrak includes periods of ignorant and top-heavy management, but that’s not their big problem. In fact, most discussion of how Amtrak is (or is not) run is a big fat red herring. Amtrak labors under three major burdens:

1) Chronic under-funding, deliberately designed to keep it underfed;
2) Track sharing with the freight railroads, who claim priority in scheduling; and
3) The breathtakingly wrong notion that passenger Rail should “pay for itself”, a notion NOT applied to other modes of transportation (see Transportation Subsidies: Who’s Really On Welfare?, ABQ Trial Balloon, June 2008).

Despite these serious problems, and in anticipation of possible future improvements in Congress’s attitude toward national Rail, we want to see Amtrak expanded; not just maintained at its present half-starvation level. A good place to start this expansion is right here in the American West:

FILLING IN THE BLANKS

If you compare a map of the Interstate Highway system with one of Amtrak, you’ll see that if the former was anything like the latter, we’d be missing, among other routes, all of I-25. These gaps need closing, the sooner the better; therefore:

Rails Inc is calling for the establishment of daily Amtrak Superliner service from El Paso, Texas to Shelby, Montana; via Albuquerque, Denver and Cheyenne (see map). We’re calling this service The “Rocky Mountain Flyer” (RMF). Since significant obstacles exist along portions of our proposed route, making this train happen will require a united effort on the part of the Governors, Departments Of Transportation (DOT’s), federal and state legislators, freight railroads and advocacy groups in the five states along the route, coupled with an exciting and thorough public information campaign.

Why? Because modern Rail—any kind, anywhere—offers a breathtaking number of benefits, a few of which are listed above. Besides these, the RMF would link together Amtrak’s four principal Western routes: the Sunset Limited, the Southwest Chief, the Zephyr and the Empire Builder; plus the cities and highways along the RMF’s route.

Some of Amtrak’s most successful routes are those sponsored and funded by one or more states. Further, as implied above, we think Amtrak could do a fine job if they ever once got the money to do it right. The rolling stock sitting around awaiting repair and rehab in their holding yards would more than enable what we propose, with enough left over to improve other routes. The success of Amtrak California is one among several examples of how a State government can work with Amtrak to restore idle equipment to revenue service.

The recently signed legislation authorizing an increase in Amtrak funding (!) is only a beginning. Congress has yet to appropriate the money. Perhaps this development, along with the proposed “stimulus package”, could work in harness with our “RMF” proposal to create some momentum toward the complete passenger Rail network our country so badly needs.

We believe that any political leader who sticks his/her neck out for more and better passenger Rail will find said neck pretty safe after all; not from the flat-earth special interests, but from the general voting public.

Passenger Rail is one of the few products and services in America in which Supply is cynically restricted in the face of great and increasing Demand. Some Free Market. Our people want more trains. Let’s supply them. Rails Inc can be reached at: rails@nmrails.org.
By John Shiley

The Rio Grande Valley Farmers Guild, the farmer-owned, taxpayer very little, and even food supply for the nation. Amazingly too high. Rice production had led to a price crash, and the combination of production had led to a price crash.

In 1933, Wallace was confronted with a farm economy that had been damaged and then bashed. Overproduction had led to a price crash, and the combination of environmentally harmful farming practices and drought had created the Dust Bowl. Wallace understood that to turn things around, he needed to control the volatility of markets and to change the way people farmed. Through the Commodity Credit Corporation, the Farmers Home Administration, and other New Deal farm programs, the government allowed farmers to store 40 percent of their crops, to lower prices when prices were low, and the stored crops were then sold when prices rose too high. This guaranteed fair markets for producers and a more stable food supply for the nation. Amazingly, these programs actually cost taxpayers very little, and even made money in some years. And through the Soil Conservation Acts of 1935 and 1936, the USDA rewarded farmers for setting aside highly eroded land or switching from soil-depleting crops to soil-restoring grasses and legumes. Expenditures for Wallace’s conservation programs, adjusted for inflation, were actually higher than several recent Farm Bills. Wallace understood that when agricultural markets fail, the government has a duty to protect farmers, the environment, and the public.

The predicament facing Gov. Vilsack is really not so different from 1932. The symptoms may seem new: climate change, global food shortages, biofuels, food safety scares. But the central problem is the same: run amok and the unsustainable farming practices they promote. Distorting free market fundamentals and agribusiness lobbying have gutted Wallace’s programs or twisted them beyond recognition. Farmers and consumers are back on the boom and bust rollercoaster. Over the last year, many consumers have experienced sticker shock in grocery aisles as food prices shot up. Now, agriculture commodity prices have plunged again, leaving many farmers to sell their products for less than it cost to grow them and to depend on government pay-ments to get by.

Today, the real winners in the system are a tiny handful of agri-business companies, who profit from the boom bust cycle and whose anti-competitive control of the market hurts farmers and consumers alike. The tremendous concentration of land and economic power in the food system today is much greater than in Wallace’s time. And instead of a Dust Bowl concentrated in the Great Plains, we have an entire agriculture system that is toxic. It runs from the poisonous chemicals used to grow crops, to the unhealthy foods mar-keted to our children contributing to the obesity crisis, to the enormous dead zone choking the Gulf of Mexico, to the massive emissions of greenhouse gases from industrial farming.

Faced with such an array of problems, the temptation may be to tinker at the margins; to curb some of the most egregious abuses; and to try and get a few more dollars for climate-friendly agriculture and organic farming programs. Of course, this is needed. But to make the larger changes that are neces-sary, we need more than tinkering. We must directly take on price volatility and uncompetitive mar-kets in agriculture – not just mitigate the effects. And we must transition to a more environment-ally sustainable farming system.

John Shiley is the Executive Director of the Rio Grande Valley Farmers Guild, 2108 Teléfonos, SW, Albuquerque, NM 87105; 505-873-8689. Reprinted from Organic Bytes

Mercury Found In Nearly Half of All Corn Syrup

In a new study published Monday in the scientific journal Environmental Health, mercury was found in nearly 50 percent of tested samples of commercial high fructose corn syrup. The news is disturbing given that this ingredient is present in a large portion of processed American foods. According to David Wallinga, M.D., co-author of the study, “Given how much high fructose corn syrup is consumed by children, it could be a significant additional source of mercury never before considered. We are calling for immediate changes by industry and the FDA to help stop this avoidable mercury contamination of the food supply.” A separate study by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy detected mercury in nearly one-third of 55 popular brand-name food and beverage products where high fructose corn syrup is the first or second highest labeled ingredient-including products by Quaker, Hershey’s, Kraft and Smucker’s.

New Farmers Wanted

The average age of America’s farmers near- ing 60. The nation needs more young farmers. For the Newsletter of the National Sustainable Agricultural Information Service, a project of the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) is one resources among many to help beginning farmers find a farm and learn to effec-tively run it.

To order a free copy of the newsletter (www. attra.ncat.org) – 1 (800) 346-9140.

Reprinted from Organic Bytes

CONSUMERS ASSOCIATION

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March on the Pentagon
On the 6th Anniversary of the Iraq War

More than 1,000 organizations and individuals have now endorsed the March on the Pentagon to say “Bring the Troops Home NOW!” on the sixth anniversary of the criminal invasion of Iraq.

The ANSWER Coalition is joining with other coalitions, organizations, and individuals in a March 21 National Coalition to bring people from all walks of life and from all over the United States to take part in a March on the Pentagon on the sixth anniversary of the Iraq War: Saturday, March 21.

In Albuquerque, a coalition of organizations is planning with Stop the War Machine for a large demonstration of solidarity with the National Coalition. The event will be on the west side of the Albuquerque Civic Plaza, New Mexico. Folks are encouraged to participate and to contact the ANSWER Coalition Albuquerque at (505) 243-1123 or answersanty@aol.com or call 410-4808.

This March on the Pentagon will demand “From Iraq to Afghanistan: stop the warmachine.” They will insist on ending the war in Iraq and demanding “From Iraq to Afghanistan: the US pulls out now!”

The March 21, 2009, March on the Pentagon will be a critical opportunity to let the new administration in Washington hear the voices of the people demanding an immediate end to wars and occupation, and demanding economic justice. Joint actions will take place on the West Coast in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Our Kids as Mercenaries

By William A. Collins

When recruitment’s, In the war business Pay our kids, To take their laps.

The Pentagon doesn’t talk much about it, but over half of America’s presence in Iraq today is made up of mercenaries. That’s how we keep down the number of actual troops.

We now hire civilians to do the same work that most of the things they used to do for themselves. Everyone knows about Halliburton and Blackwater, but there are thousands of smaller merc ene ry companies and scores of other companies that that, at exorbitant rates, feed, house and supply our fighting men and women. The Pentagon pays for all of these, the Pentagon pays for the entire war.

Let’s think about it another way. If the United States occupied Okinawa, a small island in the western Pacific, and was charging California and New York state millions of dollars a month to house and feed American soldiers, would it be any less of a war? Would it be any less atroci ous? Would you still consider it to be a military occupation? Does it matter that these mercenaries are American?

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We must also act to end U.S. support for Israel’s on-going war against the Palestinian people. The Bush Administration also gave the green light and provided the weaponry and the money for Israel’s recent war against the Palestinian people. The U.S. leaders have instructed their military to be ready in the coming period. We must act to prevent this war.

We must also support our troops. The truth is that the U.S. military is a massive military machine. This machine is responsible for the deaths of thousands of Americans.

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Late in the legislative session back in 2006, an obscure little bill passed in the dead of the night. The state statute allowing the developer of a project on that land to capture up to 75 percent of the tax district will come from the state. The poor are also disproportionately represented by those counties considered to have “persistent poverty,” a term used to describe counties in which at least 41 percent of the population is poor.

Ten of the twelve persistent poverty counties in New Mexico are home to either a 50 percent or higher Chicanos population, or have a Native American population of at least 40 percent.

Additions to the tax base is a rural flavor. Of those 12 counties, six have seen increased poverty since 1990, and six have seen a decline. Of the three counties increased poverty, four are rural.

To sum up, the task force report said, “…poverty in New Mexico is severe, particularly in rural areas and in counties with Hispanic and/or Native American populations. While the state has experienced some positive trends regarding poverty over the past ten years, the current economic downturn may be the worst in the nation.”

Growth in New Mexico is not benefiting the poor

New Mexico has the 6th largest demographic increase in the nation, and its growing. In real numbers, that’s a difference between $118,608 on average per family in the top income bracket and $4,798 on average in the bottom.

Starting in the late 1990’s the top income earners made $6.3 times more than the lowest income earners made on average. Today, that $6.3 has climbed, with top income earners making 8 times more on average than those in the bottom income bracket.

In New Mexico, the top income bracket has been very, very, well over the past decade—their income has increased by 30 percent, as opposed to the highest income group whose income has increased by 15 percent over the same period.

While the middle income bracket haven’t seen any near the kind of growth, they did do ok, with a 7 percent increase in average income over the past decade.

But what about the lowest income bracket? Well, that income group has actually gone down. While the state done? Not well at all. Families in the lowest income bracket saw a 1 percent increase in average income over the past decade.

These numbers demonstrate that growth in New Mexico is not being shared. When you think about the rural nature of poverty and the growing inequality over the past decade, it’s clear that those living in the state’s urban edge with the use of TIDDs. It’s the largest such project in the nation so far when it comes to the use of Tax Increment Financing. But it may ultimately be dwarfed by the plans of SunCal Corporation—one of the largest real estate developers in the nation. SunCal has hired teams of high-priced lobbyists to convince New Mexico’s elected officials to finance the project in SunCal’s backyard. The state statute allowing these agreements, and TIDDs should not be allowed for new developments on the urban fringe.

New Mexico is beginning 2009 on the brink of an economic crisis, with increasing unemployment and a budget shortfall. We should fall that some say could be as high as $450 million by the close of the year. At the same time, we are already facing a kind of underfunded educational system and many New Mexicans without health care. We have some choices to make about how we use our tax dollars.

Times like these require us to stay engaged and hold elected representatives accountable to their campaign promises, to guard against proposals that may seem like easy fixes but ultimately aren’t the solution to our economic problems.

We need to protect our tax base and push for real reforms—such as universal health care—that will alleviate economic hardships for working families and ultimately increase the standard of living for the most vulnerable in our state.

As many realize, New Mexico has a lot of poverty—we ranked 48th in the nation in this regard. To get a sense of what this actually means, let’s take a look at figures from the 2008 New Mexico Poverty Reduction Task Force report: 18.5 percent of the state’s population lives at or below the poverty line, which is $17,600 for a family of three, or $1,767 a month. When you break out children, this group holds 26 percent of the state’s children.

To get around the state’s children living in poverty. Going deeper, 7.8 percent of New Mexicans live in severe poverty—a group that includes 11 percent of the state’s children. Severe poverty is defined as a family of four with an annual income of $8,800 or $733 monthly. The poor are also disproportionately represented by those counties considered to have “persistent poverty,” a term used to describe counties in which at least 41 percent of the population is poor.

Ten of the twelve persistent poverty counties in New Mexico are home to either a 50 percent or higher Chicanos population, or have a Native American population of at least 40 percent.